

Country Report

Journalists in Portugal

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Backgrounds of Journalists

The typical journalist in Portugal is male, in his late thirties and holds a university degree in a journalism or communication field. Of the 407 interviewed journalists, 187 were women, making for a proportion of 45.9 percent of the overall sample. On average, Portuguese journalists were 39.00 years old ($s=8.81$). Journalists tend to be well educated: 14.3 percent of the respondents held a degree from a graduate program and 70.4 percent held a Bachelor's degree. Another 1.5 percent of the journalists had obtained a doctoral degree, and 6.9 percent had undertaken some university studies but did not complete their studies. Of those respondents who held a university degree, a vast majority (75.9%) had specialized in communication or journalism. Across the whole sample of Portuguese journalists, 55.5 percent had specialized in journalism, 6.9 percent had studied in another communication field, and 12.5 percent had specialized in both journalism and another communication field.

Journalists in the Newsroom

The majority of journalists interviewed in Portugal held a full-time position (91.6%), whereas scarce 0.2 percent of the respondents indicated that they had part-time employments, and 6.6 percent worked as freelance journalist. Of those with full or part-time employment, 90.0 percent said they held permanent positions, and the remaining worked on a temporary contract.

Portuguese journalists are fairly experienced. On average, they had worked as journalists for 14.65 years. Most journalists worked on a specific desk (54.3%), such as politics, local news, or sports. The remaining 45.7 percent of the respondents indicated that they worked on various topics and subjects. On the whole, Portuguese journalists worked for 1.20 newsrooms ($s=.64$); 11.9 percent of them had additional jobs outside the area of journalism. A majority of the interviewed journalists were no members of professional associations (61.0%).

Journalistic Roles

With regards to professional role orientations, Portuguese journalists found it most important to report things as they are, to be a detached observer, to provide analysis of current affairs, and to monitor and scrutinize political leaders (see Table 1). The relevance of these "classic" roles was fairly undisputed among the interviewed journalists as the relatively low standard deviations indicate. Likewise, there was a strong consensus among the respondents over the need to promote tolerance and cultural diversity, to monitor and scrutinize business and letting people express their views.

Still, a majority of journalists in Portugal found it important to tell stories about the world, to provide information people need to make political decisions, to support national development as well as to educate the audience.

Other more assertive roles which are also perceived to be pivotal such as advocating for social change, motivating people to participate in political activity, setting the political agenda and influencing public opinion, feature alongside to provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life and to offer entertainment and relaxation.

Only a minority of respondents pointed out conveying a positive image of political leadership and the support of the government policy.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	401	94.8	4.71	.63
Be a detached observer	405	85.9	4.42	.89
Provide analysis of current affairs	402	83.3	4.22	.81
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	402	78.4	4.14	1.03
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	406	75.6	4.12	1.07
Monitor and scrutinize business	406	75.1	4.06	1.04
Let people express their views	406	71.7	4.01	1.01
Tell stories about the world	403	69.0	3.88	1.05
Provide information people need to make political decisions	405	62.7	3.71	1.21
Support national development	403	54.8	3.52	1.21
Educate the audience	406	51.7	3.44	1.20
Advocate for social change	403	47.9	3.35	1.19
Motivate people to participate in political activity	401	33.4	2.91	1.26
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	403	31.3	2.98	1.16
Set the political agenda	405	29.1	2.86	1.11
Influence public opinion	401	28.9	2.82	1.15
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	403	24.6	2.77	1.12
Provide entertainment and relaxation	402	17.2	2.44	1.14
Convey a positive image of political leadership	403	4.7	1.64	.94
Support government policy	402	1.7	1.37	.72

Question: Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work. 5 means you find them extremely important, 4 means very important, 3 means somewhat important, 2 means little importance, and 1 means unimportant.

Professional Ethics

Portuguese journalists generally demonstrated a strong commitment to professional standards of ethics. The respondents almost unanimously agreed that journalists should always adhere to the codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context (see Table 2). Furthermore, almost nine out of ten journalists disagreed with the view their ethical decisions are a matter of personal judgment whereas roughly the double of them considered it to be sometimes acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it. However, less than half of the interviewees subscribed to the idea that journalists' ethical decisions depend on the specific situation.

The picture was mixed with regards to a selected number of potentially controversial reporting techniques. A large majority of journalists in Portugal found the use of hidden microphones or cameras, and confidential business or government documents without authorization as well as use re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors justifiable on occasion (see Table 3). Still, most journalists thought it was acceptable to get employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information, and exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story or claiming to be somebody else. Only a minority of journalists found it permissible to both altering photographs or quotes from sources.

The practice of “brown envelope journalism” - that is, journalists taking money from sources, presumably in return for positive coverage - was accepted by more than one third of Portuguese journalists.

Table 2: Ethical orientations of journalists

	N	Percentage saying “strongly” and “somewhat agree”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context	403	94.5	4.60	.67
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	403	33.5	2.58	1.38
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	402	21.6	2.40	1.24
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	401	12.5	1.98	1.12

Question: The following statements describe different approaches to journalism. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree. 5 means you strongly agree, 4 means somewhat agree, 3 means undecided, 2 means somewhat disagree, and 1 means strongly disagree.

Table 3: Justification of controversial reporting methods by journalists

	N	Percentage saying “always justified”	Percentage saying “justified on occasion”
Accepting money from sources	404	34.2	.7
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	404	33.7	2.7
Altering photographs	404	31.2	9.9
Publishing stories with unverified content	405	28.9	18.3
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	403	24.8	28.5
Claiming to be somebody else	403	24.6	34.0
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	402	23.4	41.5
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	402	22.9	39.3
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	405	21.0	43.5
Paying people for confidential information	401	20.2	28.4
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	405	20.0	58.3
Using hidden microphones or cameras	403	11.9	68.7

Question: Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?

Professional Autonomy and Influences

Journalists in Portugal reported a fairly high degree of professional autonomy. Three out of four respondents (76.3%) said that they had complete or a great deal of freedom in their selection of stories. With a total of 84.9 percent, the number of respondents who had complete or a great deal of freedom in deciding over what aspects to emphasize in a news story was even higher. Yet a minority of journalists (44.1%) reported that they participated in editorial coordination activities (such as meetings and news management).

News production is influenced by a variety of factors. Among the potential sources of influences mentioned in the interview, “journalism ethics” fared on top of the list among Portuguese respondents (see Table 4). A majority of journalists found their work substantively constrained by information access (or lack thereof), by time limits, and by editorial policy considerations. Also, more than half of the respondents admitted their work was influenced by their personal values and beliefs as well as by the availability (or non-availability) of news-gathering resources.

Overall, internal factors were found to be more influential than external constraints. Portuguese journalists felt little influenced by sources from within the political and civic realm: the government, pressure groups, military, police and state security, business people, public relations, politicians, censorship and religious considerations. They also reported only minor influence from friends, acquaintances and family as well as from colleagues in other media. Likewise, economic influences - stemming from profit expectations, owners and managers, as well as market competition and advertising - seem to have little relevance in Portuguese newsrooms.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	398	92.7	4.60	.71
Information access	404	78.2	4.10	.92
Time limits	400	73.3	3.98	.96
Editorial policy	400	63.3	3.81	.94
Your personal values and beliefs	377	62.1	3.82	1.14
Availability of news-gathering resources	393	58.8	3.73	.97
Relationships with news sources	403	47.9	3.38	1.12
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	392	47.4	3.41	.94
Feedback from the audience	405	35.8	2.99	1.14
Your peers on the staff	370	30.5	3.01	.93
Competing news organizations	403	30.0	2.94	1.01
Media laws and regulation	402	27.1	2.78	1.15
Managers of the news organization	323	24.1	2.70	1.11
Audience research and data	326	21.8	2.63	1.12
Owners of the news organization	297	18.5	2.45	1.13
Profit expectations	270	17.8	2.36	1.11
Religious considerations	196	15.8	2.04	1.27
Colleagues in other media	406	15.3	2.33	1.05
Friends, acquaintances and family	406	14.3	2.25	1.10
Advertising considerations	267	12.0	2.09	1.04
Censorship	405	6.7	1.57	1.00
Politicians	403	5.0	1.60	.89
Public relations	396	4.8	1.82	.89
Business people	402	4.7	1.62	.90
Military, police and state security	398	4.5	1.56	.89
Pressure groups	405	4.4	1.61	.88
Government officials	400	3.5	1.54	.84

Question: Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential.

Journalism in Transition

Journalism is currently in a state of change. According to Portuguese journalists, the use of search engines, social media and competition had most profoundly changed over the last five years (see Table 5). Overall, the journalists' responses point to a substantive deterioration of working conditions in the profession. A large majority of respondents reported an increase in their average working hours, the importance of technical skills and profit making pressures. Furthermore, most interviewed journalists felt that the time available for researching stories had dropped. Another major concern for Portuguese journalists was the decrease in journalism's public credibility and ethical standards.

Influences on journalism and news production have changed as well. With the exception of ethical standards, influences on journalists have increased for all sources mentioned in Table 6. Here, it was especially the influence of social media, competition and profit making pressures that had strengthened the most during the

past five years. A majority of Portuguese journalists reported an increase for other market-related influences - such as advertising considerations, audience research - as well as for user generated contents, audience feedback and education. Ethical standards were the only source of influence that had substantively weakened over the years.

The questions about changes in journalism were only presented to journalists who had five years or more of professional experience.

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
The use of search engines	320	94.7	.0
Technical skills	319	78.1	7.2
Average working hours of journalists	320	77.5	1.6
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	319	64.9	10.7
Having a university degree	314	50.6	8.0
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	320	43.1	11.3
The relevance of journalism for society	319	38.9	26.3
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	320	21.6	40.9
The credibility of journalism	316	20.6	48.4
Time available for researching stories	317	6.6	83.3

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Portugal. 5 means they have increased a lot, 4 means they have somewhat increased, 3 means there has been no change, 2 means they have somewhat decreased, and 1 means they have decreased a lot.

Table 6: Changes in influences on journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "strengthened"	Percentage saying has "weakened"
Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter	316	92.4	.9
Competition	316	83.5	4.4
Profit making pressures	317	77.6	2.8
User-generated contents, such as blogs	319	75.9	6.0
Audience feedback	317	70.7	5.0
Advertising considerations	316	70.3	4.4
Audience research	315	66.0	4.4
Journalism education	318	64.5	8.5
Public relations	316	63.0	7.3
Audience involvement in news production	317	60.9	6.6
Pressure toward sensational news	316	52.5	13.9
Western ways of practicing journalism	309	40.1	10.7
Ethical standards	319	24.1	43.3

Question: Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in Portugal. 5 means they have strengthened a lot, 4 means they have somewhat strengthened, 3 means they did not change, 2 means they have somewhat weakened, and 1 means they have weakened a lot.

Journalistic Trust

Regarding trust in public institutions, Portuguese journalists turned out to have reasonable faith in three institutions: their own - the news media, followed by the security forces: police and the military (see Table 7). The parliament and the courts were also found somewhat trustworthy by Portuguese journalists. Respondents did not hold in particularly high esteem both the religious leaders and the trade unions and had relatively little confidence in the government, political parties and politicians in general.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The news media	398	44.7	3.37	.73
The police	398	35.4	3.19	.90
The military	382	32.7	3.17	.89
The parliament	400	22.3	2.85	.91
The judiciary/the courts	398	20.6	2.80	.92
Religious leaders	395	13.7	2.54	.97
Trade unions	398	13.3	2.63	.89
The government	400	7.8	2.30	.91
Political parties	397	3.8	2.16	.85
Politicians in general	399	2.8	2.20	.81

Question: Please tell me on a scale of 5 to 1 how much you personally trust each of the following institutions. 5 means you have complete trust, 4 means you have a great deal of trust, 3 means you have some trust, 2 means you have little trust, and 1 means you have no trust at all.

Methodological Information

<i>Size of the population:</i>	5,750 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	stratified proportionally systematic sampling for newsrooms and simply random for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	407 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	mail/e-mail
<i>Response rate:</i>	54.6%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	10/2013-07/2014